

**From:** Constance Sidles  
**To:** [PRC](#)  
**Cc:** [Juarez, Debora](#); [Pinto de Bader, Sandra](#); [Gerry.Pollet@leg.wa.gov](mailto:Gerry.Pollet@leg.wa.gov)  
**Subject:** Project 3028516 comments, Seattle Audubon Conservation Committee  
**Date:** Tuesday, September 19, 2017 2:30:18 PM

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To: Seattle Department of Construction and Inspection  
ATTN: Public Resource Center  
PO Box 34019  
Seattle WA 98124-4019

[PRC@seattle.gov](mailto:PRC@seattle.gov)

Contact: Julie Ledoux  
Planner: Colin Vasquez

Re: Project 3028516  
11340 23rd Avenue NE  
Seattle WA

Dear Department of Construction and Inspection:

We are writing to formally ask you to hold a public hearing before granting any building permits for construction at the following site - Project 3028516, 11340 23rd Avenue NE, Seattle, WA.

As chair of Seattle Audubon's Conservation Committee, I and the committee are concerned about the destruction of heritage conifers in a part of the city that has hosted nesting Merlins every year since 2008. Merlins are small falcons that are usually found only in forested areas, especially areas that border open habitat. In 2008, much to the delight of all our members - and every birder in town - two Merlins elected to build a nest in the Victory Heights neighborhood. They successfully raised chicks, and they and their progeny have been doing so every year since. Many of the grown chicks have spread their hunting territories to other parts of the city, creating an urban population of falcons that never existed here before.

Merlins require a different, mature conifer to nest in every year. They do not build their own nests but take over nests abandoned by other birds, especially crows. Merlins also require other big conifers nearby to roost in, hide from other birds until they can explode out and catch another bird to eat. If they catch more birds than they need, they will cache prey in still another big conifer.

So you see, if the builder cuts down the trees on this site, it will put unacceptable pressure on these birds. It will also diminish the tree canopy of our city. The City Council set a goal of 30% canopy cover. Yet how can we achieve this level of tree canopy for the good health of our citizens and our wildlife, when 72% of the canopy is in private hands and you allow a major set of mature trees to be cut?

Surely there must be a way for the builder to design houses that would preserve heritage trees. In fact, such designs could very well be an added value to the finished houses: Think of marketing houses that lie in the heart of wild falcon territory.

Furthermore, the ridge along which this plat lies is great habitat for migrating Merlins, who pass through our region in both spring and fall. This boosts the local Merlin population even more, and makes it even more likely that homeowners could experience the thrill of seeing one of these raptors, which, pound for pound, are one of the fiercest hunters in the animal kingdom.

We would very much like to express this concern in public. Seattle Audubon leads a local community in appreciating, understanding, and protecting birds and their natural habitats. We are Washington State's oldest

environmental conservation organization and recently celebrated our 100th anniversary. We maintain a current staff of 14 and reach a local membership base of approximately 4,000 people. We would like to explain in public the value of preserving urban habitat for birds. We acknowledge that housing is in the public interest, but so is urban nature. Therefore, we ask again that you hold a public hearing about this project before you grant any permits. Thank you. - Constance Sidles, Chair, Seattle Audubon Conservation Committee

Seattle Audubon Society  
8050 35th Avenue NE  
Seattle WA 98115